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Tuesday, 11 November 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tidjani
	Chile	Mr. Andereya Latorre
	China	Mr. Cheng Jingye
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Trautwein
	Guinea	Mr. Sow
	Mexico	Mr. Pujalte
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Atieh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

Security Council mission

Report of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan from 31 October to 7 November 2003

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03-60684 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of November, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador John Negroponte, Permanent Representative of the United States, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of October 2003. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing deep appreciation to Mr. Negroponte for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Report of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan from 31 October to 7 November 2003

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bâzel (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ambassador Gunter Pleuger, head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Pleuger to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I would like to welcome the return of members of the Council and the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Afghanistan. I give the floor to Mr. Gunter Pleuger, head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

Mr. Pleuger: Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor to report to the Security Council on the trip of the Security Council to Afghanistan. A written report will be distributed shortly.

The Security Council mission to Afghanistan, which concluded last Friday, took place almost two years after a United Nations-sponsored conference in Bonn laid the foundations for the peaceful future of Afghanistan. It came at a critical juncture in this process, as it coincided with the release of the draft constitution that represents one of the cornerstones of the Bonn Agreement. The mission thus had an opportunity to canvas first-hand opinions from Afghan interlocutors on the ongoing constitutional process.

The primary purpose of the mission was to send a signal to the Afghan people that Afghanistan remains high on the agenda of the Security Council and that the international community continues to support the peace process in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the mission sent a clear message to the local and provincial authorities that it is imperative that they stop factional fighting, participate in the Bonn process and cooperate with the central Government.

Before entering into the details of the political talks, I should like to highlight that the Security Council mission was greatly welcomed and appreciated by all Afghan interlocutors, in Kabul as well as in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif. Its members felt that, after decades of war, Afghans are grateful for all assistance from the international community in rebuilding their country. The strong signal of support, which was the stated purpose of the mission, was warmly welcomed by the Afghans.

The members of the mission were greatly impressed by the eagerness of the Afghans to stand together, rebuild their country and improve their living conditions. In particular and in contrast to other crisis areas, there is, despite continuing ethnic divisions and

factional fighting, an Afghan national identity and there do not appear to be any separatist tendencies in Afghanistan. At the same time, in order to give a complete picture, I must mention that the Afghan interlocutors voiced increasing frustration about the lack of a peace dividend and tangible benefits, in particular in the provinces.

In the last two years, the Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, has made significant progress in implementing the Bonn Agreement and in recovering from the devastation caused by more than two decades of war. The mission noted strides made in many areas, including the successful launch of a new national currency, the ongoing reconstruction of roads, the reopening of schools, progress in the reform of the security sector, the start of a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) campaign, preparations for the constitutional Loya Jirga and the release of a draft constitution during the presence of the mission in Kabul. That overall progress is clearly visible in every corner of Kabul: construction is under way everywhere, the markets are filled with goods, school children can be seen everywhere and, last but not least, the city is jammed and, unfortunately, also polluted by heavy traffic.

Notwithstanding those gains, major challenges lie ahead, and much remains to be done if the peace process is to become irreversible and security in Afghanistan is to be realized. Insecurity caused by terrorist activities, factional fighting and drug-related crime remain the major concerns of Afghan society. The south and south-east were singled out by all interlocutors in that regard, where insecurity, including attacks against non-governmental organizations, is contributing to a slowing of reconstruction. That insecurity and the attacks were highlighted again just today by the reports of the very unfortunate attack on the United Nations office in Kandahar. The threats faced by those regions limit access by the Government and development agencies. Such insecurity also poses a direct challenge to the full implementation of the Bonn Agreement, as it constricts the political space necessary for national political processes and blocks access to many areas, threatening to disenfranchise parts of the population, notably in Pashtun-majority areas.

In too many areas of Afghanistan, individuals and communities suffer from abuses of their basic rights by local commanders and factional leaders. The mission heard vehement complaints by women's organizations and civil society groups regarding intimidation, harassment and exclusion from social, economic and political activities.

Judicial institutions remain weak, and the narcotics economy is largely unchecked. In particular, the narcotics economy, because of its rapid growth in recent months, has the potential to dwarf the legal economy and threaten the small gains in the field of reconstruction and economic stabilization achieved to date. If progress in the fight against narcotic drugs cannot be achieved in the near future, the resulting long-term costs of addressing the consequences of drug trafficking and instability and of the terrorist networks that capitalize on them could potentially be far greater.

Successfully addressing the aforementioned challenges, in particular in the security sector, will ultimately depend upon further expansion of the authority of the central Government to ensure its control of all armed forces and weapons as well as national revenues, and the establishment of representative and effective national institutions responsible for ensuring justice and security. In that regard, the recent expansion of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was unanimously welcomed by the Afghans.

However, most Afghan interlocutors considered the envisioned deployment of a German provincial reconstruction team to Kunduz as not sufficient and called for a deployment of ISAF contingents throughout Afghanistan. They emphasized that strong support by international forces is necessary to provide an enabling environment for the Bonn process, to build up the national army and police and to extend central governmental authority to the provinces. This view is also shared by Ambassador Brahimi. Lasting peace and security in Afghanistan cannot be achieved by the Afghan authority alone. It also depends upon the international community's continued and coordinated political and financial support for Afghanistan.

I should now like to elaborate on some key issues in greater detail. The first and foremost issue in Afghanistan is security. Throughout the visit, security was at the centre of the mission's discussions with all interlocutors. The mission clearly saw how the lack of security — some called it "the rule of the gun" — affected the entire Afghan peace process. According to Afghan interlocutors, the three main sources of

insecurity are terrorism, factional fighting and drug production and trafficking.

In the provinces of the south, south-east and east, insecurity is greatly exacerbated by terrorist attacks from suspected elements of the Taliban and Al Qaeda and from supporters of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Those elements pose a significant threat to the newly established national police force and to the Afghan National Army, to Afghans supportive of the central Government and also increasingly to the assistance community. These threats have significantly slowed reconstruction by limiting access by Government, international humanitarian and development agencies. This, in turn, increases the risk that the predominately Pashtun population — already frustrated by its relatively low representation in the Government — will become marginalized. In that regard, the mission was encouraged to learn about and welcomed plans by the coalition forces to deploy pilot provincial reconstruction teams in the south and south-east and to consider pilot projects for regional development zones.

Long-term stability for Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the neighbouring States. Many of the Afghan interlocutors consistently spoke of instability caused by Taliban and Al Qaeda elements believed to be crossing the border into Afghanistan. However, in briefings by the Foreign Ministry in Islamabad, during a necessary stopover, and by the Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan, they assured the mission that Pakistan is doing its utmost to control its border with Afghanistan and emphasized the need for further international assistance in this regard.

In too many areas of the country, the arbitrary control exercised by local commanders and factional armies has resulted in heavy casualties. Last month, the heaviest factional fighting since the signing of the Bonn peace process took place in Mazar-i-Sharif. In meetings with provincial officials and factional leaders in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif, the mission emphasized the vital importance of cooperation between the provinces and the central Government. It also emphasized the need for the respect of human rights and the creation of a civil society. In particular, in the meeting with Atta Mohammad and Abdul Rashid Dostum, the mission underlined in strong terms the need to implement the reforms outlined for the north. These reforms include, in particular, the integration of the local forces into a national army, the demilitarization of Mazar-i-Sharif and the appointment of professionals to key positions in the local administration.

Many interlocutors, including President Karzai and Foreign Minister Abdullah, listed drug production and trafficking as a major source of instability. They claimed that drug production and trafficking feeds terrorism, criminality and corruption. Ambassador Brahimi stressed that the magnitude of the problem could lead to Afghanistan becoming a narco-State. As described by Finance Minister Ghani, the production of opium is draining resources from Afghanistan, as it results in larger defence, health and economic costs. He urged the international community to provide prosecutable evidence, which would contribute to the isolation of the perpetrators. Senior officials of the Afghan Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emphasized the need for a comprehensive programme of action to combat drug production and trafficking. Furthermore, they highlighted the need for increased cooperation from neighbouring States in this regard. As drugs originating in Afghanistan have a significant impact on end-user markets, there is a need to strengthen drug control efforts beyond Afghanistan, including along the borders. The mission commended the initial efforts undertaken by the Afghan Government, assisted by the United Kingdom as the lead nation, in counter-narcotics, and called for a sustained, coordinated and comprehensive effort to combat drug production and trafficking.

Regarding international assistance in the security sector, the mission reiterated that, ultimately, the Afghans themselves must assume responsibility. However, until Afghan security institutions can be developed there will be a continued need for international forces. In that regard, all interlocutors warmly welcomed Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) and requested international deployments throughout Afghanistan.

The mission was impressed by the positive contribution of ISAF to security in Kabul and by the role of the United Kingdom provincial reconstruction team in Mazar-i-Sharif. It looks forward to ISAF's further contribution to the Bonn process, in particular in support of the Constitutional Loya Jirga and the electoral process.

Furthermore, the mission was briefed on initiatives to accelerate security sector reform. Efforts aimed at the development of the national police received a significant boost with the recent provision of additional assistance from the United States. These initiatives are of particular importance in providing the necessary environment in which the Constitutional Loya Jirga and electoral processes can be successfully conducted. In that context, the Minister of the Interior highlighted the importance of providing regular funding to the Law and Order Trust Fund, which is used in particular for the salaries of police officers.

With the appointment of 22 new senior-level officials, the first step in the reform of the Ministry of Defence has been implemented. The Afghan interlocutors and their international partners underscored that, while much more is required to transform the Ministry into a truly representative body, that progress allowed the pilot phase of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration exercise to commence in Kunduz. The mission invites the Afghan Government to build on those initial measures to complete the reform process and extend it to other key institutions — starting with the Ministry of the Interior and the intelligence services — to ensure that they are both broadly representative and professional.

To date, the benchmarks of the Bonn peace process have been attained, largely on schedule. However, Afghanistan has now entered the most critical phase in the peace process: the Constitutional Loya Jirga and election processes. By their nature, those processes bring to the forefront issues that divide society. In Afghanistan, the conditions necessary for a credible national political process are not yet in place: national reconciliation requires greater focus; political parties need time to develop; national institutions must undergo reform; and the power of the factional leaders must be diminished. Furthermore, some local commanders continue to ignore the demands of the central Government vis-à-vis appointments of provincial officials and the remittance of customs revenue.

The mission, following discussions with the head of the Electoral Unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), is of the view that, notwithstanding the substantial efforts of UNAMA and the Afghan electoral authorities, the ability to undertake registration is made precarious not only by the lack of security, but also by the dearth of funding. The mission noted that the draft constitution — which was released during the mission's visit — provides for a transitional arrangement that allows a gap of up to 12 months between the convening of presidential elections and that of parliamentary elections. That time gap was particularly welcomed by Special Representative Brahimi, who was of the view that holding parliamentary elections too early could lead to a consolidation of the present political situation in the provinces. In that context, the mission underscored the need to hold parliamentary elections as soon as possible after the envisaged presidential elections.

The mission met with representatives of civil society and of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. Many of the representatives described vividly the general situation in their areas, which was characterized by pervasive abuse of a broad range of human rights. In response to those claims, the mission emphasized in all talks with regional leaders the importance of a vibrant civil society and respect for human rights for the stability of Afghanistan.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society called for an end to impunity and for the establishment of a mechanism for transitional justice and the deployment of human rights monitors. They stressed that it was unacceptable that perpetrators of grave human rights violations in the past continued to hold high public office. However, senior officials of the Afghan Government and other interlocutors suggested that, at present, Afghanistan was too weak to face the challenges of the past and that the focus should rather be on the establishment of good governance practices.

Furthermore, the mission had an opportunity to exchange views with the Minister of Women's Affairs and received briefings from civil society representatives on gender issues. The rights of women — particularly their active participation in the social, political and economic spheres — continue to be seriously hampered by culture, custom and the lack of security. The mission was shocked to learn about the frequent death threats against women's rights activists and that the rate of suicide among women was very high: in the past six months alone, there were more than 40 cases, often as women were reacting in desperation against forced marriages. Civil society representatives underlined the need for women's issues to receive serious and immediate attention. In particular, they were concerned about the present draft

of the constitution, which in their view does not provide sufficiently explicit guarantees for women's rights.

As a concrete outcome of the mission, we recommend the following. First, all factional forces should be withdrawn from Kabul as a matter of urgency and in accordance with Annex I of the Bonn Agreement. Secondly, the international community should urgently commit further funds to the Law and Order Trust Fund and should enhance assistance activities in the security sector. Thirdly, the Afghan Transitional Administration should follow through and extend to other key institutions the recent reform of the Ministry of Defence. Fourthly, the mission supports the Afghan President's wish to convene a follow-up conference to the Bonn process early next year and invites the Secretary-General to study the possibility of such a conference in order to ensure the necessary financial support and political momentum for peace and stability in Afghanistan. Fifthly, the Afghan Transitional Administration should initiate a process of national reconciliation directed at all Afghans willing to help rebuild the country, irrespective of past events, in order to strengthen the central Government and the basic institutions of the State. Furthermore, it should ensure broad and universal participation in the peace process, in particular with regard to the role of women.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the members of the Afghan Transitional Administration and UNAMA for their hospitality during the visit. I should also like to thank UNAMA and the members of the Secretariat for their valuable support in the organization of the mission and to commend all UNAMA staff for their dedicated work to the benefit of Afghanistan in an extremely challenging and insecure environment. And lastly but not least, I should like to thank the members of the Security Council for their cooperation and team spirit, which made it a pleasure to chair this mission.

The President: I thank Ambassador Pleuger for his briefing. On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all members of the Security Council mission, which was very ably led by Ambassador Pleuger, and for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.